

TRAIL MANAGEMENT

Special, regional, local, and neighborhood trails are the four categories of trails identified for management and are defined below:

Special trails are trails which require unusual management practices or buffer widths because of historical significance or unique values. Management guidelines should be developed for such trails on an individual basis. The Iditarod Race Trail and the Iditarod Historic Trails are the only special trails identified in the plan.

Regional trails are trails with high priority of use for the region and may include intercommunity trails, trails to important subsistence use areas with no other means of practical access, or trails used by more than one community. These trails are generally used for both motorized and nonmotorized access. Most intercommunity trails can be expected to see increased use as the region's population increases. Some regional trails may change as use patterns and resources shift over the long term.

Local trails are trails which provide access to subsistence use areas used primarily by one community. Local trails can also include important but seasonal access to mining or recreation areas. Some local trails may change as use patterns and resources shift seasonally or over the short term. Trails which connect villages or are used by more than one village are regional rather than local.

Neighborhood trails are trails which provide access within settlement areas. Since no communities are immediately adjacent to state lands, all guidelines for neighborhood trails will pertain only to trails within new settlement areas.

Goals

Public Use Opportunities. Ensure continued opportunities for public use of important subsistence, recreation, development, and historic trails.

Local and Regional Trails. Assist in establishing local and regional trail systems that provide access.

Special Trails. Manage special trails to protect historic resources and recreational opportunities as well as public access.

Neighborhood Trails. Protect access to trails within settlement areas.

Trail Setbacks. Protect or establish setbacks, buffers, easements, and rights-of-way to protect resources and uses along and adjacent to trails.

Management Guidelines

A. Management of Trail Buffers. Trail buffers are areas which have been kept in public ownership adjacent to land which has been sold or leased. Trail buffers generally will be managed to preserve trail use, minimize negative effects from adjacent land uses, and maintain the natural vegetation within the buffer. Timber sales, material sales, and leases for activities that impact the natural vegetation of the buffer will, to the extent feasible and prudent, be managed so as not to adversely affect the trail's use, physical nature, or aesthetic character. This guideline does not preclude trail crossings or rerouting of trails.

Buffers should be sized to minimize potential land use conflicts or negative effects of adjacent land uses, and protect the quality of the experience of the user. Buffer widths described in the guidelines that follow in this section may be increased to minimize conflicts between trail use and adjacent landowners, to protect the privacy of adjacent landowners, to separate motorized from non-motorized uses, to allow future siting of public facilities, to allow flexibility for rerouting, or to provide options for protecting long-term public uses, scenic resources, or environmental concerns. Buffer widths may vary along the length of a trail because of the above considerations. The width of a buffer on any portion of a trail should also be based on the management intent for adjacent public land described in Chapter 3. However, the minimum width of the buffer should be 100 feet (50 feet each side of centerline). Trail buffers should be located and designed in consultation with affected divisions of DNR, the Department of Fish and Game (DF&G), the Department of

Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), affected coastal districts and private parties, and appropriate community organizations (see *Coordination and Public Notice*, Guideline C, page 2-5). Activity areas of 10 to 40 acres may be identified along trails and reserved for other uses such as camping or rest areas.

B. Buffer Widths for Special Trails.

1. The Iditarod Race Trail. Where the Iditarod Race Trail passes through an area that is to be offered for settlement or other development, the trail will be located and protected by a publicly owned corridor 200 feet wide (100 feet on either side of the centerline). The corridor width may be expanded to minimize potential land use conflicts, reduce impacts of the trail on adjacent land uses, or to incorporate cultural and historic sites. Rerouting of the trail corridor may be permitted with the consultation of the Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, and the Iditarod Trail Committee or similar body in place at the time a decision is made, and in accordance with Guideline H, page 2-55.

No permanent structures or equipment should be placed in the trail corridor if they could adversely affect the trail experience or access along the trail. Where necessary, trail crossings may be permitted to allow access to lands on both sides of the trail. Crossings should be limited to a few discrete areas rather than scattered crossings in many places along the trail. In areas where the trail has been used previously for transporting heavy equipment to mining claims, this use will not be restricted unless there is significant potential for damaging the trail. If damage to the trail cannot be avoided, a feasible and prudent alternative route should be used or the activity should be permitted at a time that does not interfere with the race or trail conditions.

2. The Iditarod National Historic Trail System (INHTS). There are several trails and historic sites within the planning area that were identified as part of the INHTS. Some of these trails and sites are well defined while others are not. Minimum trail buffers will generally be wider than the 100-foot minimum (50 feet each side of centerline) established for regional trails. For permits and leases along the INHTS, the State Office of History and Archaeology will be

consulted in addition to other notice requirements.

The State of Alaska and the U.S. Department of the Interior have signed a memorandum of agreement covering management of the INHTS under terms of the Comprehensive Management Plan for the trail system. The trail will be managed in a manner consistent with the agreement.

C. Buffer Width for Regional and Local Trails.

Regional trails on state land shall be protected by a publicly owned buffer that has a minimum width of 100 feet (50 feet each side of center line). Local trails will be identified in accordance with Guideline E, below, and buffer widths will be established on a case-by-case basis.

D. Management of Trail Setbacks. Trail setbacks are areas of land along trails which are located on state land and are not adjacent to or encompassed by private lands. Trail setbacks serve to preserve trail use and minimize negative effects from adjacent land uses. Authorized activities will, to the extent feasible and prudent, be managed so as to not adversely affect trail use or the aesthetic character of the trail.

E. Identification of Trails. Before lands are conveyed from state ownership or leases and permits are issued, trails will be identified that merit consideration for protection by retention in state ownership, easement, trail buffer, or trail setbacks. The Division of Land and Water Management will be the lead agency for identification of trails and will consult with the other divisions of DNR, DOT&PF, DF&G, affected private land owners, and appropriate community organizations (such as those listed in Appendix B) when identifying trails and their uses. At a minimum, trail identification efforts will be based on the appropriate NWAP Working Maps for Trails and the Kotzebue Area and Nome Area Easement Atlas (see sources in Appendix C.) In addition, any agency, organization, or individual may identify public trails to be considered for protection.

F. Management of Neighborhood Trails. Neighborhood trails are protected through management plans or disposal design under guidelines recommended in DNR's subdivision

design manual. Once identified, trails will be recorded on the state's land record system and reserved through issuance of a right-of-way permit. The following criteria should be used to determine whether a neighborhood trail should be protected by easement or public ownership:

1. If the trail serves as a neighborhood collector trail that connects to a public open space system or regional or statewide trail, it will be kept in state ownership.
2. If the trail will be used almost entirely by neighborhood residents for travel within the entire disposal, it should be kept in state ownership or dedicated to the local government.
3. If the objective is to provide local pedestrian access between two lots to improve pedestrian circulation within a subdivision where a greenbelt and neighborhood trail system does not provide adequate access or where it is impractical to establish an integrated trail system described in 1 and 2 above, an easement may be used.
4. In cases of land offerings other than subdivisions (for example, land opened to homesteading), a publicly owned buffer or an easement will be used to protect trails. If a trail has the characteristics described in criterion 1 or 2 (above), it will be retained in public ownership. If a trail has the characteristics described in criterion 3, an easement will be reserved.

G. Trail Crossings. When it is necessary for powerlines, pipelines or roads to cross trail buffers, crossings should be at a 90° angle to the

buffer when feasible. Vegetative screening should be preserved at trail crossings.

H. Rerouting Trails. Rerouting of trails may be permitted to minimize land use conflicts or to facilitate use of a trail if alternate routes provide opportunities similar to the original. If trails are rerouted, provision should be made for construction of new trail segments if warranted by type of use. Rerouting trails should be done in consultation with affected divisions of DNR, DOT&PF, and DF&G, private land owners, affected coastal districts, and appropriate community organizations, such as those listed in Appendix B.

I. Other Guidelines Affecting Trail Management. Several other guidelines may affect trail management. See the following sections of this chapter:

- Coordination and public notice
- Fish and wildlife habitat
- Forestry
- Grazing
- Heritage resources
- Lakeshore management
- Materials
- Public access
- Recreation and scenic resources
- Settlement
- Stream corridors and instream flow
- Subsistence activities and traditional uses
- Subsurface resources
- Transportation and utilities
- Wetlands management